



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

2024 State Priorities

Address every aspect of Pennsylvania’s health care workforce crisis.

Pennsylvania’s health care workforce shortages are among the most severe in the nation. Lack of staff in every care setting is making it increasingly difficult to move patients throughout the continuum and is threatening access to care at every level. It is essential to prioritize policies that attract, educate, train, deploy, support, safeguard, and adequately reimburse the important work of health care professionals across all services and settings.

Bolster behavioral health care to meet Pennsylvanians’ needs.

There are not enough services to care for the number of Pennsylvanians seeking mental health help. Existing programs and providers are overwhelmed by growing demand, including from many who need complex care. Hospitals are receiving and stabilizing patients in crisis but are hampered by an inability to transfer them to appropriate settings. It is essential to invest in behavioral health infrastructure and assure that reimbursement rates are sufficient to sustain the services, programs, providers, and facilities necessary to both avert and treat crisis.

Improve maternal health care across Pennsylvania.

Nineteen of Pennsylvania’s counties are low-access or maternity care deserts and severe maternal morbidity increased by 40 percent across Pennsylvania in the last decade. Trends are even more disturbing for people of color and in our rural communities. It is essential to increase primary and postpartum care, provide community-based support, expand home visiting programs, and diversify the cadre of well-qualified professionals who provide maternal care in the commonwealth.

Assure the financial viability of hospitals to care for all Pennsylvanians.

Hospitals—and the care they provide—are in jeopardy. Thirty-nine percent of Pennsylvania’s hospitals have reported operating losses, while another 13 percent posted unsustainable margins below 4 percent. Record inflation, rising drug prices, and surging staffing expenses have pushed the cost of delivering care well beyond payments from government and private insurers. It is essential to eliminate outdated regulatory requirements that do not assure patient safety, align medical assistance payments with the actual cost of care, and reform Pennsylvania’s medical liability climate.

Sustain high-quality rural health care in Pennsylvania.

Rural hospitals serve fewer patients than their urban and suburban counterparts and typically care for those who are more dependent on Medicare and Medicaid, which reimburse about 80 cents of the actual cost of delivering care. It is challenging, if not impossible, to achieve economies of scale and cover high fixed operating costs. It is essential to incentivize health care professionals to work in rural areas, enable telehealth, strengthen EMS and transportation services, and assure sufficient and predictable funding streams for rural hospitals.